The 16th meeting of the Prime Minister’s Science, Engineering and Innovation Council (PMSEIC) took place on Friday December 8th. A standing agenda item is ‘Exciting Science’ and at this time it featured the CRC Program.

Dr Peter Jonson, who is the Chair of the CRC Committee gave an overview of the CRC Program and introduced the two industry based researchers, Dr David Noon and our own Dr Lyndall Bull who began their research careers with a CRC.

Lyndall is currently Senior Manager, Technical Services within Timbercorp Forestry. In that capacity she is working with the CRC for Forestry. She gave an excellent presentation on the value of her CRC involvement. I am an ex-officio member of PMSEIC as the President of Federation of Australian Scientific and Technological Societies.

Tom Spurling
Chief Executive Officer

From left, Dr David Noon, Dr Lyndall Bull, Dr Peter Jonson outside the cabinet room
CRC Wood Innovations at Parliament House

On December 5th, 18 CRCs, including ours, were invited to present their activities at Parliament House in Canberra. The event was organised by DEST and was opened by the Minister, The Hon Julie Bishop MP. Associate Professor Barbara Ozarska and Luke Juniper represented us at this event. The Minister also presented the inaugural STAR Award for CRC engagement with SMEs to CAST CRC. We hope to submit our work with Tim Tech Chemicals and Black Forest Timbers for the 2007 award.

Dr Barbara Ozarska and Luke Juniper at the CRC Showcase

Refereed Publications

During our recent project reviews there has been some discussion about the CRC’s relatively small number of refereed publications. These are important both as an output from the CRC but also as an output for individual scientists, especially those wishing to pursue an academic career. The recent announcement by the Government concerning the RQF has heightened awareness of this issue. The Australian RQF will be the first in the world to measure both the ‘quality’ of the research (by peer review and bibliometrics) and its ‘impact’.

Researchers in our CRC are likely to score well in the ‘impact’ measures, especially if all of the commercial arrangements currently being negotiated are finalised.

The formula for distributing the funds following the RQF is not yet known, but it is most likely that a reasonably good score in the ‘quality’ area will be necessary requirement.

Section 36 of the Centre Agreement is about publications. Some relevant clauses are:

36.4 Prior to any publication, the Participant wishing to publish material relating to the Activities (“the Requesting Participant”) must forward full details of the proposed publication in writing, together with a request in writing to the CEO seeking permission to publish the material.

36.5 The CEO must within thirty (30) days of receipt of any such request notify the Requesting Participant whether permission has been granted, refused or delayed.

36.6 If the CEO, after consulting all Participants who may be prejudiced by his decision, determines that the benefits of publication outweigh the potential loss of commercially valuable Intellectual Property rights, then the CEO will inform the Requesting Participant that permission to publish has been granted.

I encourage all researchers to follow this procedure.
Research Presentation to the December Board Meeting

Ken James presented his work on the Growth Stress Meter to the Governing Board on December 5th.

He gave an excellent lecture /demonstration of the development of his new instrument. It arose from the CRC’s project to use microwaves to relieve growth stress in timber. That project soon found that there was not a satisfactory instrument on the market to measure the growth stress. The instrument devised by Ken can be used vertically on growing trees but also horizontally on logs. The photo is an early prototype of his instrument.

Scholarships and Fellowships

The FWPRDC website is a good source of information on scholarships and fellowships. It is www.fwprdc.org.au

Commercialisation Update

Progress is being made on all of our commercialisation activities.

Wood Bending
Agreement has been reached with Marand Precision Engineering concerning the wood bending plant. Work will commence in early in 2007. A new business plan has been formulated that is expected to form the basis of an Information Memorandum to raise further funding for Wood Shapes Pty Ltd. This will occur after successful production of formed components is demonstrated in 2007.

Enhanced Adhesion
The work requested by Bostik is going well and should be completed on time. We are actively seeking further applications of this technology with a variety of timbers and adhesives.

Improved Pyrolysis
The funding agreement with the Sugar RDC has been signed and work has now commenced.
Hot Wood Treatment Process and Fast Treatment Plant (Wood Preservation)
The CRC recently hosted a delegation from South Korea with interest in the treatment plant. A larger delegation from the Wood Preservers Association of South Korea is likely to visit in March 2007.

Microwave Modification of Timber
As mentioned in the last newsletter this technology is applicable to two product classes:

1. Appearance grade hardwoods. Microwave modification used to improve drying quality and reduce drying time.

Work is continuing on this project. Preliminary results look promising. We have also been approached to apply this technology to exotic plantation species.

2. Improve permeability of the corewood in lower value timbers.

Work on this aspect is continuing and we hope to be able to discuss commercial applications in the first half of 2007.

Vintorg
Koppers Wood Products is in discussions with the CRC regarding the use of the Vintorg process in power poles.

Growth Stress Meter
A more advanced prototype has been constructed which will now be tested in forest locations around Victoria.

Board Meetings in 2007

The CRC Governing Board at its last meeting agreed to hold its meeting in conjunction with the meeting of the IWM Board. The first such meeting will be held on Tuesday February 20th at Creswick. This meeting will precede a meeting of participants called to discuss the CRC Wind-up plans. All of these meetings precede the Annual Program Meeting which will be held at Creswick on February 20th and 21st. The schedule for the Program Meeting is available on our website: www.crcwood.unimelb.edu.au

Finally

This has been a very productive year for the CRC with a number of our technologies entering into their commercialisation phases. I hope all our readers have a happy Christmas and an enjoyable break. I look forward to working with everybody in 2007.